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ABSTRACT

Although there is a library in every secondary school in New Zealand, very little is known about the variables that affect the student use and perceptions of the library. This research combines questionnaires and focus groups involving Year 12 and 13 students to give a picture of school library use in Christchurch. Students were asked about where they went for information for the last school assignment, use of the school library, and perceptions of library staff. Results indicate that nearly all students use the library, over half find library staff approachable, and 60 percent used the school library for their last school assignment. The Internet was used by a large proportion of students as an information source. Two variables that affected school library use were the perception that the school library had relevant resources, and usually finding what was needed in the school library. Students who used the school library for their last school assignment were found to make more use of all other information sources than students who did not use the school libraries. Appendices include a copy of the school library questionnaire, letter of introduction to the school principal, school principal consent form, student permission slip, focus group questions, and school demographics questionnaire. (Contains 65 references, 6 graphs, and 4 tables.) (Author/MES)

Student Use of the Secondary School Library

by

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Submitted to the School of Communications and Information Management,
Victoria University of Wellington
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Library and Information Studies

November, 2001

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Abstract

Although there is a library in every secondary school in New Zealand, very little is known about the variables that affect the student use and perceptions of the library. This research combines questionnaires and focus groups involving Year 12 and 13 students to give a picture of school library use in Christchurch. Students were asked about where they went for information for the last school assignment, use of the school library, and perceptions of library staff. Results indicate that nearly all students use the library, over half find library staff approachable, and sixty percent used the school library for their last school assignment. The Internet was used by a large proportion of students as an information source. Two variables that affected school library use were the perception that the school library had relevant resources, and usually finding what was needed in the school library. Students who used the school library for their last school assignment were found to make more use of all other information sources than students who did not use the school library.

Key Words.

Secondary school library; secondary school student; school library use; library staff; perceptions and attitudes; information-seeking behaviour; questionnaire; focus group.

1. Introduction

Every secondary school in New Zealand has a library to provide for the educational and information-seeking needs of the school community. Many thousands of dollars are spent by schools on library staff, collections, and equipment to maintain the school library. Collections are varied with educational books and journals, recreational fiction and magazines, and access to electronic resources all within the library's realm. As well as provision of materials, the library (through the librarian) also plays an educative role in the school through the teaching of library skills and information literacy. Library users can be separated out into two distinct groups - teachers and students.

A recent study by Chalmers and Slyfield (1993) has given some insight into New Zealand teachers' use of various libraries, training needs in information skills and technologies, and how satisfied teachers were with the service they received from various libraries.

Within New Zealand there is little known regarding the utilization of the school library by students. Most of the research in this area has been carried out overseas, some in Australia but primarily in the United States and Britain. With few exceptions, the research is small-scale and survey-based. Results show that there are many variables that affect the way students use the school library. Accessibility, teacher attitudes, library staff, information technology, and student perceptions are but a few that impact on library use.

2. Literature review.

This review looks at the literature about the secondary school library. The main focus is the use of the library by students. It initially comments briefly on teenagers as a specific library user group, looking at what teenagers want in a library. It then touches upon research linking academic performance and school libraries. Next it looks at some key historical literature. Following this, the focus is on more recent research and opinion regarding secondary school student attitudes, perceptions, and use of the school library. Due to the limited amount of literature available on secondary school libraries, research regarding teenagers and the public library has been included where applicable.

Rodger (1990) defines a good public library as offering "an appropriate array of services and readily available materials from a convenient building, staffed by helpful people during convenient hours, and that the public knows about" (18). This could easily be used to define a good school library and to delineate six distinct aspects that make up a good library. They are services, materials, buildings, staff, hours, and marketing. All six play a role in the amount of use a library receives from its customers and in forming the perceptions that people have of the library. The school library educational programme is what distinguishes it from its public counterpart.

For the purposes of this literature review, use of the library is defined as physically entering the library premises. This can be either voluntary or teacher-directed. It encompasses getting materials checked out / in, studying, socializing, and reading.

2.1. Teenagers as a user group.

Much of the literature regarding the vagaries of teenagers using libraries has been generated in the public library sector (Caywood 1993; Dunn 1993; Minudri & Goldsmith 1999; Peterson 1989). Studies go beyond the physical need for a separate young adult space and collection (Dunn 1993) to tips on how to treat teens and so attract them to the library (Minudri & Goldsmith 1999). Adolescents move between juvenile and mature behaviour with great rapidity and the need for trained staff to be aware and tolerant is important (Caywood 1993; Peterson 1989). Chelton (1999) found that people "remember more how they are treated in a service encounter than what they get from it"(109).

As well as a fabulous collection of books, magazines, CD's and videos, and the latest computer facilities, teenagers want a library that reflects the teenage culture; colourful surroundings with posters, easy-chairs; a place to listen to music, eat, drink, and talk as well as a place for quiet work; friendly staff with a minimum of rules (Higgins 1999; Meyers 1999). The question becomes how far does the library turn into a common room in an effort to be attractive to the student population?

2.2. Academic performance and the school library

In today's climate of accountability it is important that the tax dollar is spent wisely. With the current lack of any national standards or guidelines for New Zealand secondary school libraries (Slyfield 1997) how is it possible to determine their quality; their value for money? The National Library of New Zealand states the purpose of a school library "...is to actively support teaching and enhance students' learning within the total school programme..." and that "an ongoing process of evaluation designed to monitor the schools' use of the library is essential" (The National Library of New Zealand 1989). But, why should we be concerned with the quality of the school library?

It has always been assumed that students gain benefit from having access to a school library. Until the Colorado Study results were published in 1993, the evidence was mainly anecdotal. Researchers in Colorado found that the level of library funding, staffing levels, collection size and range, and the instructional role of the librarian all had a direct impact upon the grades of the students. When all other factors were taken into account, they found that as the level of financial support for the library increased so did the grades of the students. The only other variable that had as much influence on grades was 'social at-risk', of which poverty and lack of educational qualifications among adults were the influential factors (Lance 1994; Loertscher 1993; Small 1998; Hamilton-Pennell et al. 2000; Lance 2000).

Krashen (cited in Loertscher 1993) carried out a comprehensive literature review on voluntary reading by children. He found a strong positive association between the amount of voluntary

reading by a child and grammar, spelling, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing style. A major influence on the amount of voluntary reading was a well-stocked, well-staffed school library.

The Colorado Study and the Krashen review clearly show a link between the library and academic performance.

2.3. Historical overview.

A study in Melbourne by P. Brosnan in 1976 comments on earlier work by fellow Australians, E. Roe (1962) and R. Lunden (1971). Roe found a real antipathy towards libraries and librarians from the participants in his study. Libraries were places to be avoided. By the time of Lunden's study the attitudes of students had changed markedly. School libraries were seen as "a source of enjoyment and learning." Brosnan also found a positive response from her study. Most students made voluntary visits to the school library primarily to get information for work. A high percentage enjoyed using the library although the rules and the staff presented problems for some (Brosnan 1976).

A comprehensive British study by Rudduck and Hopkins (1984) indicated students used the library as more than an information repository. Some saw the library as an informal common room, a place to meet and chat with friends. Others used it as an escape, either from the cold or the playground. Where teachers used the library as a detention centre, student opinion of the library was understandably negative.

Accessibility was an issue with regards to the use of school libraries (Charter 1987; Miller & Russell 1985). The hours that the library was open dictated the amount of use that it received. Lack of access before and after school combined with sport/music/recreational activities during lunch times limited availability to students. Students were found not to rely solely upon the school library for information but to use a wide variety of other information sources (Colorado State Library Survey 1974; Mancall & Drott 1980; Miller and Russell 1985).

The library staff surfaced as a key factor in student use. Student perceptions of staff as rule-oriented, unapproachable old women with glasses and buns led to a lack of enthusiasm from students to enter the library (Brosnan 1976; Charter 1987). Where the librarian was actively involved with teaching staff the student use of the library increased. The increase was due to the influence of the classroom teacher in directing the students to the library (Mancall and Drott 1980).

Within New Zealand there have been some early efforts made to look at the school library system. In 1960, Andrew Osborn surveyed school libraries and found them to be erratic in quality, hardly used, and lacking in trained staff (cited in Fenwick 1975). This eventually led to a major study in 1975 giving a snapshot of the library services available to children in both primary and secondary schools, and the public system. It underscored the lack of trained staff, the limited knowledge of how to use libraries effectively, and that the stereotype of the secondary school library as an extension of the English Department was prevalent (Fenwick 1975). Interestingly,

though, no effort was made to ask the children their views. Fenwick focused on the library facilities, book stock, and staffing and made various recommendations based around these areas (44-46).

Another important early New Zealand study is that by Patricia Smart in 1985. Her interest lay in the use of the secondary school library. Smart looked at nine secondary schools in the Canterbury region. She carried out a comprehensive assessment of each of the nine libraries, including buildings, book stock, staffing, budget, and general 'atmosphere' during class library times.

The study took that of Fenwick one step further in that it also involved a survey of the students who were using the library. Students answered questions regarding why and how often they came to the library, how successful their visit was, and how important they perceived different aspects of the library. Interestingly, nearly seventy percent of respondents felt that what they learnt about the school library would be of use to them after finishing school (Smart 1985, 77).

Smart's study raises some interesting questions. Do the majority of students still see library skills as so relevant? Has the growth in new technologies since her study changed student perceptions of the library and it's staff? What Smart did not do was to look at library budget and staffing and see if these had an influence on the usage. In other words, Smart did not examine whether the better resourced libraries got used more.

In her conclusion, Smart states that "thought should be given to what schools want their libraries and librarians to do for them" (63) and that "school libraries clearly need more investigation" (64).

2.4. Recent research

2.4.1. New Zealand

The National Library of New Zealand's Research Unit conducts research to "support the policy programme of the National Library, and to evaluate Library programs and services" (The National Library 2000). The Research Unit has recently presented the findings of an overview of the Curriculum Information Service (CIS) offered to schools by the National Library. Interestingly, the Unit discussed ways of possibly establishing a link between well-resourced school libraries and "learning outcomes" (The National Library 2000) which sounds very similar to the previously mentioned Colorado Study.

The Research Unit has also been involved in an Assessment of School Libraries in 1999. Advisors from the National Library Advisory Service went to randomly selected schools and assessed the status of their library. They found that 31% of libraries were following 'best practice'. High decile or relatively wealthy secondary school libraries were more often using 'best practice' than school libraries from low decile poorer schools. Staffing was found "to be one of the key variables associated with effectiveness of the library" (The National Library 2000). This echoes the concerns of Smart (1985) who stated "library staffing to be the area most in need of attention" (1). The lack of a concise definition of the key terms such as 'best practice' and "effectiveness" in the Research Unit article is a real frustration.

These two reports could be useful in studying school library use by students. The CIS overview has data on budgets, staffing and resources while the Assessment survey dealt with best practice. If it was proven that well resourced, well-staffed libraries following best practice mean greater student use then school librarians could use the results to support requests for adequate library budgets.

A random survey of school libraries in New Zealand (Slyfield 2001) found that secondary school libraries were focused on "providing curriculum-related information"(47). Few secondary school teachers take their classes to the school library for regular book exchanges and only 12% of schools said that "all or most" of the teaching staff used the library to teach information skills (42).

2.4.2. Methodology

Grover and Fowler (1993), in an overview of recent school library research, make the comment that surveys are the methodology most used (242). This is borne out by the fact that only three of the articles in this literature review used a different approach - focus groups (Berson 1995; Day 1991; Thompson 1991). Of these three, only one (Berson 1991) involved school libraries. Berson (1991) found that the success of the discussion group was heavily dependent upon the level to which the students felt able to participate freely in the discussion (71). It may be that, within the school environment, the anonymity of a survey could result in greater honesty from respondents who may not wish to contribute in a group discussion.

In the two cases where focus groups were used, they were a precursor to more substantial surveys (Day 1991; Thompson 1991). Both point to the need for a skilled facilitator to gain most benefit from the group sessions. Day (1991) concluded that "In discovering unfavourable as well as favourable attitudes towards library services, the open group discussion method certainly seems more productive than the questionnaire" (392).

Some questionnaires seem designed to only elicit favourable responses, requiring answers to 'how has this library helped you at school?' and 'write one thing you particularly like about this library' (Manson 1999). Bias is a common problem in survey design (Bell 1999; Fowler 1995; Leedy 1997; Statistics NZ 1995). One has to question the value of Manson's results for another reason. Manson was attempting to get the "true feelings" (68) from students regarding the library she ran in a fairly small boys school. How honest would the responses be when "Boys were required to write their names on the form as this information was considered useful" (69)?

School library research tends to be small-scale, focusing on one or two schools. They are mostly descriptive, survey-based studies designed to investigate a problem or issue at a particular school library, often by the school librarian. According to Fitzgibbons and Callison (cited in Grover and Fowler 1993) this has meant that "existing research does not build on previous research in the field" (242) and that "few studies propose hypotheses or explore cause-and -effect relationships" (242). Possibly this is due to the isolated nature of school librarianship as a profession. With the launching recently of the School Library Association New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA), there is

hope that increased collegiality may lead to a less piecemeal approach to school library research in New Zealand.

2.4.3. Access

Most students visit the library during class time or to complete assignments (Burks 1996; Hampton 1993; Oravec 1997). Teachers have a great influence on the use of the school library. Olen (1992) found that "many students never made any *voluntary* use of the media center " (37). Combine this with the comment by Burks (1996) that " it is likely that many students who visit the library media center only with classes think of themselves as nonusers" (147) and the research paints a grim picture.

Schools can limit student access to the library by allowing the library building to be used as a venue for other activities (Burks 1996; Collins and Martin 1993; Hampton 1993; Shilling and Cousins 1991). Inconvenient opening hours are mentioned as a factor in non-use of the school library (Burks 1996; Hampton 1993; Olen, 1992; Phtiaka 1994). Olen (1992), in studying the utilization of school library media centers in South Africa, calculated that weekends and holidays alone meant that students could not use the library for over one half of the year (36). If these calculations were to be done in New Zealand it is likely that the results would be similar.

2.4.4. Use.

When students use the library voluntarily, lunch time is the most popular time (Hampton 1993; Oravec 1997). Where the library is open prior to and after school, students will take advantage of this but in small numbers (Hampton 1993; Oravec 1997). This can be due to a general unawareness that the library is open (Hampton 1993). Students use the library voluntarily for a variety of reasons. Some go to escape the playground (Collins and Martin 1993; Phtiaka 1994; Shilling and Cousins 1991), while Oravec (1997) found that students visited the library for recreational reading, playing on the computers, meeting friends and doing homework (23). Libraries are set up primarily for their educational role. If the buildings were designed to accommodate all the activities that students clearly use them, it would be interesting to find out how this would affect the use.

Students do not rely solely on the school library for recreational or homework-based materials. Large numbers of school students use the public library (Granheim 1990; Fourie and Kruger 1994; Phtiaka 1994; Oravec 1997). Use of the public library system occurs for a number of reasons including opening hours, the collection (Olen 1992; Heeks and Kinnell 1994; Phtiaka 1994), and the belief that the needed information will not be found in the school library (Anderson 1990). Academic libraries also find high school students using their facilities (Craver 1987; Ng and Williamson 1992). Some school students use these libraries in preference to and instead of their school library or as an adjunct to it. Studies surveyed by Craver (1987) noted that students use academic libraries in preference to the school library because of their locality, opening hours, and larger collections (54).

2.4.5. Image

"User perceptions and attitudes are likely to have implications for levels of use of the school library and for library performance in general" (Waters 1993, 19).

During a customer satisfaction survey in Auckland, participants were asked to describe the public library as if it were a person. The image they came up with was that of a dowdy old matron in a tweed skirt and her hair in a bun (Thompson 1991). When teenagers have been asked what they dislike about public libraries they have tended to be scathing. Libraries are "frequented by nerds, dorks, and dweebs" (Meyers 1999) with unfriendly staff and a multitude of rules (Day 1993; Phtiaka 1994; Meyers 1999).

The most consistent criticism of the school library tends to revolve around the book stock. Students perceive the stock to be limited in selection and depth. Most students turn to the public library to supply recreational and assignment based materials (Collins and Martin 1993; Olen 1992). Anderson (1990), as the New Zealand Collection Librarian at Canterbury Public Library, came to the viewpoint that "for many teachers and students the first place they think of for their research is the public library" and among teachers there "is a belief that the school library is inadequate for the more specialized needs of the senior student" (9). Anderson was making her comments ten years ago. Do teachers and students still bypass their school library and head to public libraries for research assignments?

Student use of the secondary school library is affected by a complex array of factors. Teachers, technology, access, image, staff, and book stock all play a part in determining usage. Literature and research on use of the secondary school library has been carried out primarily in the United States. Within New Zealand the subject appears not to have been touched upon since Smart's research in 1985.

2.4.6. Key questions

The key questions raised from the literature are as follows.

Where do New Zealand secondary school students go for their information needs?
Are New Zealand secondary school libraries meeting the needs of their student population?
What are the perceptions of senior secondary students regarding the secondary school library?

This research project goes some way towards answering these questions. It surveys Year Twelve and Year Thirteen students in three Christchurch secondary schools to discover how they meet their information needs and what use they make of the school library.

3. The Problem

3.1. Need for the study

Delivery of the integrated curriculum means that 'library skills' should not consist of a quick once-around-the-library during an English class. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework "specifies eight groupings of essential skills to be developed by all students across the whole curriculum throughout the years of schooling" (17). Information seeking skills is one of the eight essential skills. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993) identifies five distinct aspects of information skills that students are required to be taught throughout their school career. Students need to be able to

"identify, locate, gather, store, retrieve, and process information from a range of sources; organise, analyse, synthesise, evaluate, and use information; present information clearly, logically, concisely, and accurately; identify, describe, and interpret different points of view, and distinguish fact from opinion; and use a range of information-retrieval and information-processing technologies confidently and competently" (18).

If the integrated curriculum has indeed become a reality, students should be making use of library resources over a wide range of subject areas rather than perceiving the library to be an adjunct to the English Department.

It has always been assumed that the provision of a school library is a 'good thing'; that locating a library within the school grounds will mean that students use it. But is this the case? There appears to be no recent New Zealand data on student use of the secondary school library. Given that libraries in other sectors have developed a customer service approach, the school libraries are lagging behind. Surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes are all playing a role in moulding the policy and practice of a large variety of libraries. School libraries are there to serve the needs of the clients. This cannot be done effectively without consulting the largest client group – students. With the financial outlay that schools make to provide a library it makes commonsense to ensure maximum utilization of the resource.

Schools will benefit from a greater knowledge of how students use and perceive the library. This knowledge will enable better targeting of resources and/or marketing strategies for maximum effect. The knowledge will enable identification of areas where student needs are not being met and assist in the planning of future services.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

3.2.1. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

The zone of proximal development is

"the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined though problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Cole et al 1978, 86).

What this means in the educational world is that students are deemed to be capable of reaching higher levels of attainment than that which they are currently at. Their full potential can be developed within a supportive environment encouraged by others who are more knowledgeable. The phrase 'scaffolding children's learning' is used by Vygotsky to denote the framework or scaffold that teachers and others must set in place to enable students to learn at an optimum level. Teachers set the scene or framework for learning, and as students learn, the bare bones of the framework is filled in with experiences and knowledge.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development sits well in the school library situation. All students arrive at the school library with certain skills. The home environment and primary school are but two of the places that students will have built their knowledge base from during the early school years. Students have the potential to grasp the fundamentals of information literacy and information seeking. These skills will be nurtured and developed throughout their secondary school career.

With the availability of the library resources and the skilled assistance and teaching from library staff, students can progress towards independence in information seeking. With each step up the ladder, each new skill achieved, there then should be another challenge for the student to encounter and overcome with the help of supportive library staff.

3.3. Statement of the Problem.

The problem is the lack of recent data on student use of the school library. Without data there is no way to determine the value of the library to a school. There is nothing but anecdotal evidence to suggest that students have all moved from the school library to the Internet/public library/university library to meet their information needs.

This research investigates senior secondary students use and perceptions of the school library for three Canterbury secondary schools. The aims of the project are to ascertain:

- the level of school library use by senior secondary school students.
- for what subjects students make class visits to the school library.
- if students ask for help from library staff and why / why not.
- perceptions students have of the school library and staff.
- what other libraries or information resources students use.

3.4. Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this research is:

That senior high school students believe the school library has inadequate resources and services to meet the needs of their academic work and therefore they make little use of the school library.

Within the framework of the theoretical context, the students (rightly or wrongly) feel that they have learnt all they can from the school library environment. Instead of being challenged to develop more skills they are faced with the known and familiar. Possibly, given finite resources,

the school librarian focuses her / his effort on preparing students for their Year 11 project. Once this is completed the students are deemed to be 'library literate' and left pretty much to their own contrivances in the library.

3.5. Research Questions

With regard to the problem statement the research seeks to answer these questions.

1. Do senior secondary school students use the school library?
2. If senior secondary use the library, why do they do so? For example, socializing or study?
3. If senior secondary students do not use the library, why not?
4. What other information sources do senior students make use of?
5. Where students use other libraries is this in preference to and instead of their school library, or as an adjunct to it?
6. Do students ask library staff for help to find resources?
7. How do students perceive library staff?
8. Is the library still perceived as part of the school English Department?

3.6. Definition of Terms

Within this study the following definitions of terms will apply:

Library. Unless otherwise stated "library" will be used to denote a secondary school library.

Student. Unless otherwise stated "student" will refer to senior secondary school students in year twelve or thirteen.

Use. As relates to the library, "use" will be defined as physically entering the library building for whatever purpose and includes fixed-schedule classes.

Library Staff. The term "library staff" will encompass all those who work in the library. No distinction is made between qualified or non-qualified staff.

3.7. Limitations and delimitations

Results are limited to the extent that students have participated seriously and completely in the project.

Results are limited to the schools that the researcher gained access to.

The study does not attempt to evaluate the library skills and / or information literacy programmes at the schools.

The study does not evaluate the effect of library visits on student academic performance.

4. Research Design

4.1. Research Methodology

This research involves both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected by use of questionnaires. Statistical analysis of the questionnaire data provides the basis for answering most of the research questions.

Small student focus groups provided more in-depth, qualitative information. Use of the focus groups enabled any issues relating to the library, but not covered in the questionnaire, to come to light. Within a nonjudgmental group situation people are more inclined to voice their opinions (Kruger 1994, 12). Information regarding student perceptions of the library gained from the focus groups will augment the statistical data from the questionnaire.

4.2. Specific Procedures

After approval from the Ethics Committee, the pilot study was commenced. Contact was made with a local secondary school to seek permission to conduct the pilot study. The pilot study provided the opportunity to assess the questionnaire. Questionnaire design was evaluated and refined.

Concurrently, contact was established with secondary school principals to gain permission for the study. Co-educational schools were approached in order to exclude any variation in library use that may occur due to the nature of single-sex schools. Preliminary contact was followed by the information package about the study (see Appendix G). As each school sets its own policy regarding the need for consent from pupils and parents (York 2000) provision of the questionnaire at this stage allowed the principal and / or school librarian to reflect upon the nature of the questions. It was expected that decisions regarding consent from individual schools could be different.

Telephone contact was made with the librarians at each of the three schools that consented to take part. Consent forms were discussed with School 1 and a decision was made to ask for student consent only. The reasoning was that the questionnaire was of an innocuous nature and unlikely to cause offence. If consent forms went home with students for parents to sign, the return rate was expected to be very low. By altering the forms to student-only consent, they could then be given out and collected in at the same time as the questionnaire was. This proved to be very successful and was used in School 2 and School 3 also. The benefit of this approach was that it maximized the response rate from students.

Questionnaires and consent forms were dropped off at the three schools during Term 3, 2001. Librarians at School 1 and 3 and a teacher at School 2 gave out the questionnaires and consent forms to selected senior classes. Class selection was left up to the school. There were some delays at School 2 because of senior exams and in School 3 due to pupil absences. As a first-time researcher, I was possibly too hesitant in my dealings with the school contact person and not explicit enough regarding the time-frame that I was working within. This meant that I ran out of time to collect all the data that I had hoped from School 3.

Focus group participants were selected after completion of questionnaires. Focus groups consisted of students from different classes and were held during a lunch break. Ideally, selection

to participate in the focus group should be done in a random manner. However, due to the fact that the focus group were held during a school lunch break, volunteers were asked for instead. The danger of randomly selecting students to give up a lunch time to discuss the library is that the researcher may have ended up with no participants. For this reason, voluntary selection was deemed the appropriate choice. As an incentive, pizza was provided for students to eat during the focus group session as thanks for their participation. Sessions were audio-taped and brief notes taken. Students were assured at the commencement of the focus group sessions that no individuals would be identifiable in the final report. It was hoped that this assurance of confidentiality would free students to discuss both positive and negative aspects of the school library. In retrospect, however, the researcher suspects that students did not feel free to discuss the library and, in particular, the library staff in a face-to-face situation with an adult. Possibly students perceived the researcher as a colleague of the school library staff and this may have made them guarded in their comments about staff.

Focus groups sessions were conducted in School 1 and School 3. A focus group was not held in School 2 as senior student examinations and a rolling teachers strike overtook events.

At the close of each focus group, the researcher made field notes about each session. Perceptions about how the session went, the general mood and atmosphere, the physical environment and any other pertinent factors were noted. This debriefing was of value for the following reasons. It helped with later analysis. It ensured that memories of focus groups were not confused with each other. It gave closure to each focus group and allowed the researcher to move on afresh to the next group (Krueger 1994: 134).

Field notes and tapes were kept under lock and key to ensure confidentiality. Questionnaires were coded and information stored in a spreadsheet programme. This information was stored on the researchers computer in a password-protected environment. Physical copies of the questionnaires were stored under lock and key with the tapes and transcripts. After completion of the study questionnaires and tapes were destroyed.

Once data collection and coding was completed, data analysis was commenced (see 4.8. Treatment of Data).

4.3. Research Population

Senior secondary school students are the focus of this research. These are students in Year 12 and 13 (6th and 7th Form). At each of the three schools one Year 12 and one Year 13 class was selected. Each student in these six classes was given a questionnaire to fill out.

This group of students was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, it was assumed that most will have completed year 11 in a New Zealand school. As part of the Year 11 curriculum they will have completed a research project that required the use of the library. This means that they should all, to a greater or lesser extent, be conversant with the resources that the school library has to offer them. Secondly, as students are in their last year or two at school, they will be starting to look out to the wider society and to what the future holds. This wider world view and experience may make them more able to critically comment upon the school environment as

regards to the library. Thirdly, teenagers can be a difficult group to study. They are renown for providing silly answers that can stymie the best planned questionnaire. It is hoped that the older age group will take a more responsible, mature approach to the study.

There were two focus groups run, one at School 1 and a second at School 3. Focus groups consisted of a small number of students who had volunteered to take part.

4.4. Assumptions

The first assumption is that all students have completed a research project in Year 11 (5th form). The second assumption is that, as part of their Year 11 project, all students received instruction in library skills and information literacy.

The third assumption is that, as part of the Year 12 and 13 curriculum, students will have had to complete assignment(s) that required the use of a library.

4.5. Instrumentation

4.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three question styles (see Appendix A). There are open-ended question designed to elicit comments or opinion. Open-ended questions are particularly valuable in obtaining information on issues that were not been specifically targetted in the questionnaire. The second type of question uses of a rating scale. Students are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a variety of statements about the school library. The final type of question involves a simple checklist to elicit yes / no responses.

4.5.2. Focus Group

The focus group sessions were guided by a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix B). As qualitative research is an iterative process, the focus group questions may change between schools and unforeseen areas of discussion. Some questions are directly linked to research objectives (e.g., for what reasons do you use the school library). Other questions are designed to promote a wider variety of responses (e.g. how would you describe your school library to a student from another school?).

It was made clear to students that their responses would remain confidential and that both positive and negative opinion was sought. Sessions were audio-taped to enable the researcher to concentrate on moderating the group rather than on note taking, although some notes were taken as a precaution against faults in audio-taping.

4.6. Pilot Study

The questionnaire was piloted at a Christchurch secondary school involving one class of senior students.

Collection of data from the questionnaire gave the opportunity to refine questions where needed and ascertain that the questionnaire actually provided data relevant to the research project.

4.7. Data Collection

Information required regarding the schools involved in the study is as follows:

- ♦ number of students
- ♦ school decile rating
- ♦ library staffing
- ♦ library opening hours

This information was requested via a questionnaire (Appendix E) from the school contact person. The information was collected when the researcher was at the schools for delivery of the questionnaires and running of focus groups.

Schools were coded as School 1, 2, and 3. Questionnaires and focus group audio-tapes were coded according to school. As a visual aid, the questionnaires given to each school were numbered 1, 2, and 3. This cuts down the possibility of data corruption when collating the results. Each school was given the results relating to their school but the research discusses the combined results only. Voice indents were used for the tapes indicating school, date, and purpose of the audio-taping.

Questionnaires and consent forms were handed out, filled in, and collected in the one session by either the school librarian or contact teacher. Focus group sessions involved audio-taped data and some notes and were conducted by the researcher.

All electronic data was stored in a password-protected environment. Audio-tapes and questionnaires were stored under lock-and-key.

4.8. Treatment of Data

4.8.1. Questionnaire Data

LOTUS 1-2-3 1997 spreadsheet package was used to analyze the coded questionnaire data. This software was used because it has the functions needed to analyse the data and the researchers familiarity with it.

Percentages have been calculated where applicable. Data for the three schools has been analyzed as a whole in order to discover any general trends. Results are displayed in graphs and tables. Correlation analysis and chi-squared tests were calculated to discover any significant variables affecting library use by students.

Statistical analysis enabled the testing of the hypothesis that senior students do not use the school library. Percentages of students using the school library compared with percentages of students using other libraries.

4.8.2. Focus Group Data

A coding system for the focus group information was developed after the data was collected. The reason for this decision was as follows. Qualitative research does not always follow the initial route planned by researchers. Much time could have been invested in developing a coding system that could have proved to be unhelpful in the final analysis.

Analysis was done using both the audio-tapes and the field notes made of each session. In keeping with the recursive nature of qualitative research, analysis was done with an open mind.

Student comments and opinions were divided into groups that related to research questions. Themes that emerged from the data were written on a wall chart as a visual aid to analysis. Quotations have been used to illustrate trends or points under discussion.

Data gained from the questionnaires and focus groups are integrated into the final report and commented on together rather than treated as separate entities.

5. Results

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not senior high school students used the school library and how they meet their information needs.

The survey and focus groups were conducted in three Christchurch secondary schools during the months of August to October, 2001. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed and, from this, 94 were completed for analysis. The 94 completed questionnaires comprised 53 Year 12 and 41 Year 13 students. The gender mix was 55 females and 39 males. Four students indicated that they had not used the school library at all during the year. This means that 90 questionnaires were used for the data analysis of school library use. Comments from students included in the results have come from either open-ended questions in the questionnaire or from focus group discussions.

Results of the questionnaire and focus groups are integrated together and discussed within the framework of the research questions. The research questions are listed below.

- R1. Do senior secondary students use the school library?
- R2. If students use the school library, why do they do so?
- R3. If students do not use the school library, why not?
- R4. What information sources do senior students make use of?
- R5. Where students use other information sources, is this in preference to and instead of their school library, or as an adjunct to it?
- R6. What variable(s), if any, affect the use of the school library by senior students?
- R7. Do students ask library staff for help to locate resources?

- R8. How do students perceive library staff?
- R9. Is the school library still perceived as part of the English Department?

Each research question is linked to the survey question(s) that relates to it. The survey questions are listed below for easy reference (see Appendix A for the complete questionnaire).

- S1. What year are you in? Year 12 / Year 13
- S2. Gender - female / male
- S3. Thinking about your last school assignment, where did you go to find information?
- S4. Have you used the school library this year?
- S5. If you do not use the school library, please indicate why not by ticking the relevant boxes.
- S6. Why did you use the school library?
- S7. Please indicate the classes you visited the school library with.
- S8. Thinking about the school library, please tick the box that matches your opinion about each of the following statements (Choices were; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree):
- S8A. I only use the library during class visits.
- S8B. I usually find what I need in the library.
- S8C. I only go to the library to use the computers.
- S8D. Library staff are approachable.
- S8E. The library is often closed when I need to use it.
- S8F. I never ask library staff for help to locate materials.
- S8G. The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork.
- S8H. I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library.
- S8I. The library is a good place to study.
- S8J. School assignments require the use of the school library.
- S8K. I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library.

5.1. Research Question R1

Do senior secondary school students use the school library?

Survey question S4 related to research question R1.

Ninety students (65.7%) said they had used the school library during the school year. Focus group students commented that they "choose to visit the library." The question elicited comments pertaining to individuals reasons for going to the library such as study and getting out of the cold (the research was conducted during cool weather). No students in the focus groups mentioned visiting the library as a class group. This was unexpected as, when responding to the survey question asking why they visited the library, 60.0% (n=54) of students indicated class visits as a reason they used the library (see Graph 1). A possible reason is that student perceptions of visiting the library as an individual and as a class group differ. Where students make a conscious decision to visit the library by themselves, they see this as "using the library." Being taken with a class group by a teacher is different. Even though students are in the library, possibly this is perceived as "class work" rather than "library use."

5.2. Research Question R2.

If students use the library, why do they?

Survey questions S6 and S8 related to research question R2.

From survey S6, three reasons were foremost for library use (see Graph 1). Class visits were cited by 60.0% (n=54) of students. Using the library as a place to study and to find course-related material in books were both cited by 59.0% (n=53) of students. These are very 'traditional' reasons to visit the library. The library is valued as a "quiet place to study." However, the use of the library as a pseudo study hall was problematic. Students complained that "when classes have it [the library] booked and you need to go in there to study, either they won't let you or the class is too noisy to concentrate." Students who use the library to meet friends also disturb those trying to study. Some of the student comment provided illustrates this point.

People come in to socialize and the librarian tries to kick them out.

Too much noise from young kids.

Not usually quiet in the lunch time.

A good place to read and relax.

A nice place to work if quiet.

They should have a separate area for Year 13.

Given the high profile of information technology, I was surprised to find that only 20.0% (n=18) went to the library just to "muck around" on the computers, and that 31.0% (n=28) used the library computers to find course-related materials. Although some students commented positively (n=10) in the questionnaire about IT in their library, ("usually computers are available," "Internet is very helpful"), most were negative (n=18). Issues surrounding access and rules generated most complaints. Focus group students were uniformly negative about school Internet access. While acknowledging the need to monitor use, they view the librarians as Internet gatekeepers. Students are irritated by the restrictions schools place on their Internet access both in terms of lack of computers and regulations regarding how and when the Internet can be used. Linking this with questionnaire data, we get a picture of low use of library information technology (IT) resources due to school imposed restrictions. This is to be compared with the high use students make of the Internet at home (see Graph 1). Students expressed the following comments regarding library IT use.

If the computers are booked for a class and you have to do work, you are kicked off anyway.

Seniors are not allowed to use the Internet in their study.

Very strict about using the Internet.

The computers are outdated.

It's quite busy, hard to get a computer.

The Internet is not accessible in the library because you have to get heaps of permission, which I understand, but it can be just like, oh whats the point, it's a bother.

Data from survey questions S8A, S8C, S8I, and S8J corroborate results from research question R6 (see Table 1). Fifty percent ($n=45$) of students said schoolwork required the use of the library. Only two students (2.2%) went to the library solely for the computers. Forty-eight students (53.3%) rated the library as a good place to study. Forty-one students (45.6%) use the library at times other than class visits. There is a high correlation between thinking schoolwork requires the use of the library and thinking the library is a good place to study (See Table 3). Chi-squared test results show that believing schoolwork requires library use made no impact on whether or not students used the school library for their last school assignment ($\chi^2(4, N=90) = 4.62, p = .05$). The two statements 'I only visit the library with a class' and 'I only go to the library to use the computers' are both highly correlated with 'The library is often closed when I need to use it' and 'I never ask library staff for help to locate materials'. Many students made positive comments regarding the school library.

A good place to study, comfy chairs.

It is a great place to study and catch up on work during study periods.

It's helpful for finding resources that I need for assignments.

It has a lot of information that is needed for assignments and it is quite easy to find, if you know how.

It's comfortable to study in.

Warm place during classes in winter.

If I need to do study I can go there because my friends won't disturb me there because who would think I'd be in the library.

5.3. Research Question R3

If students do not use the library, why not?

Survey question S5 related to research question R3.

Of the four students who professed to not using the school library, the following reasons were given; 'there are too many rules' ($n=1$), 'I do not need the library for schoolwork' ($n=1$), 'I use other libraries instead' ($n=2$), and 'the school library does not have the resources needed' ($n=2$).

These four students used a variety of information sources for their last school assignment. One student used the public library, the Internet (at home and school) and school textbooks. One used the public library and the Internet at home. A school textbook and the Internet at home was used by the third student while the fourth student relied totally on the Internet at home for information. Given the opportunity to comment both positively and negatively about the library later in the questionnaire, all four wrote comments. One explained that "I haven't used or been to the library so can't comment." The other three wrote comments (listed below) that cast doubt on the claim that they have not used the library.

The library has a good variety of resources that we are able to use.

The school library is very noisy and it is difficult to concentrate.

There are many books in the school library but sometimes I can't find the book I need.

We need more computer [sic].

It's just there if you need it.

The variety of resources are very limited.

The comments imply three of the four students who say they did not use the library did, in fact, use it. If this is so, it gives a total of 98.9% (n=93) of students using the school library.

5.4. Research Question R4

What information sources do senior students make use of?

Survey questions S3 and S8G related to research question R4.

The results to question three are interesting (see Graph 2). A high percentage of students (73.4%: n=69) used the Internet at home for information in comparison to the low number (31.9%: n=30) using the Internet at school. The possible reasons for this difference could be the ease of access at home, the freedom at home to combine information searching with other activities (e.g. checking e-mail), and the lack of any rules and/or 'net-nanny' regarding home use.

Sixty-eight percent of students (n=64) made the effort to get to the public library for information, while the next biggest use was of the school library with 60.0% (n=56).

In answering survey question S8G, 'the library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork', (see Table 1) similar numbers of students held the view that school library resources were not specific enough to meet their information needs (28.8%: n=26) as held the opposing viewpoint (32.2%: n=29). One focus group student commented:

The higher up in the school, the more specialized the information you need. A lot of the time the school library doesn't have this sort of information. It's better for general information.

While another said that "it is first in, books always go out just as soon as they set assignments" and they were "reliant on the teacher putting the books on reserve." As a point of interest, this did not lead to large numbers of students using the local university library with 11.0% (n=10) making use of this facility. Chi-squared test results show that student opinion regarding library resources had an impact on use of the library for their last school assignment ($\chi^2(4, N=90) = 16.05, p = .05$).

Eighty four comments were made by students answering the questionnaire relating to library resources, with 47 (55.9%) of them being negative. Students who were positive find the library to be well resourced, with a wide range of exactly the materials they need to complete school assignments (37 comments). Negative comments provide completely the opposite picture with these students believing the library is under-resourced, full of outdated, simplistic books that are only able to satisfy the scholastic needs of the junior students. Data from the survey question S8G (see Table 1) shows the largest response to this statement was neutral (38.9%: n=35). Fewer students agreed with the statement (28.8%: n=26) than disagreed (32.2%: n=29) but the difference is slight. It is unclear from the results why the comments about resources show a much stronger response than the questionnaire data would lead us to suspect existed. One possible answer is that students were reluctant to leave the comments section of the survey empty. When asked to make a positive and negative statement about the library, resources may be one of the first things to come to mind. For example:

They have books covering a wide range of subjects.
Not enough recent books.
Hardly ever have what you want.
Not enough good/new resource books.
It contains a large number of useful reference materials.

5.5. Research Question R5

Where students use other information sources, is this in preference to and instead of their school library, or as an adjunct to it?

Survey question S3 related to research question R5.

One of the most interesting findings of this study was that students who used the school library as an information source for their last assignment were more likely to use other information sources than students who did not use the school library. Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate that those students who used the school library resources for their last school assignment also made more use of other information sources. They were more active in seeking information than nonusers of the school library (see Graph 5). When comparing school library users and nonusers the data show that those who use the school library consistently use other information sources to a greater extent than nonusers. School library users made the following comments:

It's helpful for finding resources I need for assignments.
There's a reasonable selection of research materials for my assignments.
The library has a good variety of resources that we are able to use.
The newspaper clippings are useful.

Fifteen students (15.9%) completed their last school assignment without using any library at all (see Graph 6). For these students the dominant information source is the Internet. . Students who sought information from libraries also made use of the Internet but did not rely on it as their main source of information. Library users in general gathered information from a wider range of sources than non-library users

The following comments were made by students who did not use the school library for their last assignment.

I consider it totally normal to have to go to the public library as my primary source of serious research material.
If you type in something specific on the net you usually get it, but with a book it goes through pages of stuff before you get what you are looking for.
There isn't a lot of information for assignments.
Generally good information found in school library, but sometimes there is not enough information there, or it is too simple. Forces use of Encarta and Internet.

5.6. Research Question R6

What variable(s), if any, affect the use of the school library by senior students?

Survey questions S3 and S8 related to research question R6

Completed surveys (n=90) were divided into two groups; those who used the school library as an information source for their last assignment (n=56) and those who did not (n=34). Responses of the two groups to statements in survey question S8 were tabulated (see Table 2). Using the chi-squared test, the data were analyzed to determine whether library users and nonusers held differing opinions about the library.

When all the data were analyzed, two factors emerged as having an impact upon student use of the library for their last assignment. The two factors are 'The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork' (χ^2 (4, N=90) = 10.52, $p = .05$) and 'I usually find what I need in the library' (χ^2 (4, N=90) = 16.05, $p = .05$). Students who believed the school library had the requisite resources and those who, more often than not, found what they needed in the library used the library significantly more than those who thought otherwise. These two factors are highly correlated (see Table 3), which suggests that students who believe the library has the requisite resources are also those who are often successful in finding what they need in the library.

5.7. Research Question R7

Do students ask library staff for help to find resources?

Survey questions S8B and S8F related to research question R7.

Results show that 52.2% (n=47) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'I never ask library staff for help to locate resources.' A large minority (33.4%: n=30) indicated that they usually did not find what they needed in the library. What is unclear from the data is whether students do not find what they need because it is not held by the library, or because they cannot physically locate the materials that are in the library.

Given that only nine students (10.0%) feel that they have had inadequate instruction in library use (survey question S8K), students should be able to find materials on shelves (see Table 1). One could assume that there would be a connection between a perception of having adequate instruction in library use and the ability to locate items in the library. However, an unexpectedly low correlation exists between these two statements (see Table 3).

There are strong correlations between the statement that 'I never ask library staff for help to locate materials' and the following statements; 'I only use the library during class visits'; 'I only go to the library to use the computers'; 'The library is often closed when I need to use it'; and 'I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library' (see Table 3). Those students who ask for help from library staff are more likely to use the library at times other than class visits, for more than just the IT equipment that the library houses, and to find the library relevant and accessible than students who do not ask for help, as demonstrated by the following comments:

*If you ask them for help they can usually find stuff for you pretty quick.
The librarians and staff do try and help us when we ask.*

However, the opposite view also came out in the focus groups:

*Not enough library staff, or they are usually busy.
You have to wait awhile before they actually notice you are there.*

5.8. Research Question R8

How do students perceive library staff?

Survey questions S8D and S8F directly relate to research question R8.

Over half of the students (52.2%: n=47) found library staff to be friendly and the same number were willing to ask for help to locate materials (see Table 1). This majority generated comments about the staff being "helpful" or "friendly and supportive." Of the 20.0% (n=18) who said staff were not nice, some were vitriolic in their comments. Library staff generated 33 comments from students via the questionnaire, of which 14 were positive, 18 negative, and one other. Relating this back to the questionnaire data, we see that few of the majority of students who found staff friendly bothered to comment about staff. Exactly the opposite can be said for those who disliked staff. Where people were unhappy, or aggrieved, they took the opportunity to complain about the staff. The 'other' response was a helpful suggestion that teachers should "meet with the librarians and tell them what the main topics for the year will be. It's probably just the same stuff every year." In this way the student theorized that the librarian could ensure the library had the correct resources to meet student needs.

Complaints of staff being "grumpy," "suspicious," and "running a dictatorship" are indicative of the negative students. When asked to state the 'most negative thing' about the school library, more than one said "the staff." Similarly, when asked for 'any other comments' about the library, more than one said "get new staff."

Focus group students were less inclined to discuss the library staff, directing their conversations towards other issues (e.g. Internet access, noise levels, book stock). It could be surmised that the students who volunteered for the focus groups thought more positively about the librarians and the library in comparison to the survey population. Those who volunteered were, as one librarian put it, "good kids." This has impacted on the discussions. Comments that a missing book "really annoys the librarians" and that "they all sit out in the back room and sometimes you have to go in there and say 'hey, I want to get a book out'" are as harsh as it got.

Regression analysis indicates strong correlations between the statement that 'library staff are approachable' and the statements that 'the library is a good place to study,' 'school assignments require the use of the school library,' and 'I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library' (see Table 3). Chi-squared test results showed that opinion about the library staff was not a significant factor in use or nonuse of the library for their last school assignment (χ^2 (4, N=90) = 0.57, $p = .05$). The following comments are representative of those made about library staff:

*Librarians are suspicious of students, waiting for you to do something wrong.
Librarians instantly assume people are in the library for no good reason.
The staff are sometimes not there so I can think in peace.
Grumpy staff.
Friendly, supportive staff.*

The staff are not nice.

The staff are intimidating, loud and uncooperative and make a noisy library even more unbearable by constantly screeching about bags and e-mail.

The librarians need to lighten up 90% of the time.

Some staff are really lovely and helpful.

5.9. Research question R9

Is the library still perceived as part of the English Department?

Survey question S7 related to research question R9.

Students were asked to indicate which classes they visited the school library with. Sixty-two of the students said class visits were during English. The next highest was Biology with 34 class visits. Most of these Biology class visits occurred at one school ($n=27$). History, with 13 visits, was the only other subject to rate more than 10 visits (see Table 4).

Focus group students saw library instruction as part of the English curriculum. Library tuition was mentioned as part of the junior school English syllabus along with the word "compulsory." Other classes were only mentioned when the book stock was being criticized. For example, "they don't have a lot on some subjects like Classics, but the Classics department has its own books anyway. The library doesn't have them."

5.10. Other results

Nineteen students (21.1%) agreed with the survey question S8H, 'I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library.' Chi-squared test results show that student opinion about having 'outgrown' the school library had no impact on school library use or nonuse as an information source for their last school assignment ($\chi^2(4, N=90) = 3.44, p = .05$). Regression analysis shows a high correlation between survey question S8G and each of the following survey questions; S8A 'I only use the library during class visits'; S8B 'I usually find what I need in the library'; S8E 'The library is often closed when I need it'; and S8G 'The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork' (see Table 3).

Data collected regarding school size, decile rating, library hours, and library staffing were not used in the final analysis for the following reason. The three schools were very similar. This meant that no comparisons could be made between schools to determine if differences in library staffing, opening hours, or school decile rating had any impact on school library use by students.

The 'neutral' column in Table 1 requires some comment. Many students had neutral responses to the statements regarding the school library. In more than one case the neutral response was the largest group (S8A, S8G, S8K). The 'neutral' response group needs to be kept in mind during the subsequent discussion of the school library. For many students, statements about the library bring no real emotion. The library is "just there if you need it."

6. Discussion

The results of this study show that secondary school students are heavy users of school library facilities. At least 96% had used the library during the year. Olen (1992) found in South Africa that many students did not make voluntary use of the school library. By contrast, this New Zealand study found that many students used the library at times other than class visits (45.6%: n=41), and considered it a place to study (53.3%: n=48).

A comparison of survey and focus group material suggests that students do not always see visiting the library as a class as 'library use'. This supports Burks' (1996) suggestion that students who only use the library during class visits "think of themselves as nonusers" (147). Results from this study show that 22.2% (n=20) only visit the library during a class session. These are the students who possibly call themselves non-library users. The students in this study will all be leaving school within the next two years. Once out of school, there will be no 'class visits' to the library. We could presume that those who only use the library during class visits could become non-library users once school days are over. Given that the non-library users in this study relied heavily on the Internet for information (see Graph 5), there is the potential for one fifth of the students in the research population to be looking mainly to the Internet for information in the near future.

Anderson (1990) found students turned to the public library in the belief that the school library was inadequate. This study found that, public library facilities were used to a similar extent as the school library for the last school assignment. Given that students have to make more of an effort to use the public library than the school library it could have been expected that school library use would have been higher. An insight into a possible reason why this was not so comes from a student comment in the focus groups that "books always go out just as soon as they set assignments." This comment suggests that students believe that unless they visit the library promptly after assignments are set there really is no reason to go as all the resources will be taken. Interestingly enough, exactly the same sentiment was expressed regarding the public library. Unless you get there smartly "the books are all gone." Students look for information in the places they believe they are most likely to find it, be it the school library, public library, or other sources such as the Internet.

Few students made use of the university library. This finding is in contrast to those of Craver (1987), and Ng and Williamson (1992). One explanation might be that with the growth in information technology in the intervening years, students are more likely to turn to the Internet for information. The impact of the Internet on student information seeking behaviour in New Zealand needs further analysis. The high use of the Internet also has implications for teaching of information skills to students.

English is still the subject for which students visit the library. If, "for secondary teachers, the most common way of using the library was to provide opportunities for students to seek information for curriculum related studies" (Slyfield 2001, 43), one has to question the definition of the word 'common'. Apart from the Biology department at one school, there is a distinct lack of class library use in all curriculum areas other than English. What is not clear from this study is why non-English subject library use is so low. Student comment implies that students also link

the library with their English class. Indeed, the comment from a focus group student that teachers and librarians need to meet to discuss curriculum topics, (which was heartily agreed with by other students in the group), suggest that students have no real perception of the links between library staff and teaching staff. This leads students to think that library resources (or lack thereof) are the sole domain of library staff. The collaboration between library and teaching staff needs to be more transparent.

Mancall and Drott (1980) and Olen (1992) found that teachers influenced the school library visits of students. Within the New Zealand context, Anderson (1990) found that secondary teachers often directed their senior students to the public library for resources. Teachers believed that the school library was ill-equipped to deal with the resource needs of senior students. This study did not probe teacher influence on library visits but the high number of Biology class visits at one school gives an indication of the influence teachers do have.

Contrary to other research (Burks 1996; Hampton 1993; Olen 1992), this study found library opening hours were adequate for students access. Few felt that the library was not open for use when they needed it. Student complaints about lack of access centered around the use of the library by classes at times that interfered with individual needs for study. No student mentioned the use of the library for non-library activities as creating lack of access to the library. This differs from the findings in studies by Burks (1996), Collins and Martin (1993), Hampton (1993), and Shilling and Cousins (1991). Impediments to library access were not specifically targeted by this research beyond library opening hours. It is possible that more detailed questioning could provide a different result.

Research by Oravec (1997) that found students used the library as a multi-purpose building was supported by this study. Most use was for the 'traditional' library reasons of finding materials, class visits and study. Other uses included non-work related computer use (20.0%) and socializing (23.3%). This study found that the multi-use nature of the library facility creates conflict. Working students require quiet while socializing students create the opposite environment. Students who are in the library to do schoolwork complain that the library "is too noisy" and value the "quiet study space." This problem needs resolution as the disparate use causes the librarians image to suffer. Either the librarian is berated as lacking control and allowing "too much noise," or "pretty much yelling most of the time" in order to silence talkers. Given today's financial constraints it is unrealistic to suggest that library buildings are extended to include a separate study area. Librarians need to get the students on-side, possibly by linking in with the school council. As long as the librarian has the role as designated 'noise controller' the situation will not improve.

The image of the librarian as a 'rule-obsessed harridan' is being challenged but has not died away completely. Those who were dissatisfied with the library staff were in the minority (20.0%) but they generated far more comment than the positive majority. Many stated the most negative thing about the library was "the staff." However, over half (52.2%) of students said staff were approachable. Some representative positive comments are "staff are helpful," "staff are really lovely," and "friendly, supportive staff." Given the challenges faced by librarians juggling the different public roles of noise-monitor, finder of information, and teacher of library skills, to

name a but a few, the fact that so many students feel positively about the library staff is no mean feat.

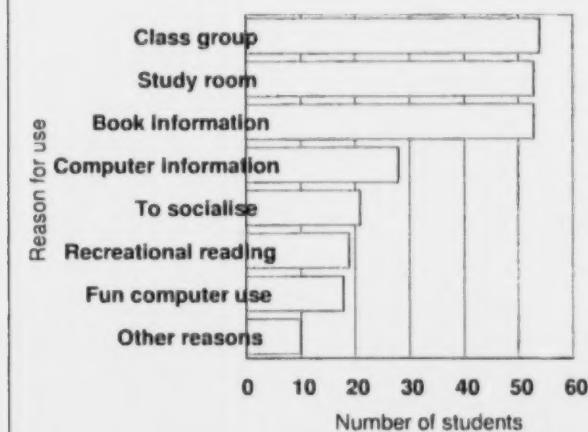
Within New Zealand, it is possible to qualify as a librarian and gain employment in a secondary school library without having any knowledge of teenagers and the specific challenges that they present as a customer group. This could mean that some librarians are ill-equipped and / or ill-prepared to deal with their major user group - teenagers, warts and all. Caywood (1993) and Peterson (1989) both stress the need for staff training regarding the teenager user-group to ensure a positive outcome for all. A course that focuses on 'school librarianship' would provide the opportunity for this situation to be remedied.

Senior students made the point that they were nearly adults. They set themselves apart as a distinct group from the junior students. For some, having to abide by the same library rules as junior students is an indignity. Higgins (1999) and Meyers (1999) found that teenagers who used the public library wanted it to reflect teenage culture. This study found senior students want the school library to do the same within their senior school culture. They express a need for a separate space within the library where they can study, talk quietly (about study, of course) and access both books and the Internet. Just as some schools have a different uniform for their senior students to reflect their position in the school, possibly, something similar could be done with regards to library rules and access. For example, given that Internet access is an issue for many, a slight easing of the regulations surrounding its use for senior students could be negotiated. A differentiation between senior and junior students could be a way to acknowledge the 'elder' status of the senior students. It may even encourage them to act accordingly.

The use of the focus group as a way of gaining information that was not asked for in the written questionnaire was only partially successful. There are three reasons why this could be so. Firstly, possibly once students discovered that the researcher was a 'librarian' they may have circumspect about comments regarding library staff. Perhaps they saw me as a colleague of the school librarian rather than as a neutral researcher. This made me a potentially unsafe person to disclose information to. Contrary to Day (1991), this research did not find that the focus group discussion was the key to unlocking the negative comments about the library. It supported the finding of Berson (1991) that the success of a focus group is heavily dependent upon people feeling they can participate in the discussion. Secondly, the skill of the facilitator is very important in focus group sessions (Day 1991; Thompson 1991). As these focus groups are the first ones that this researcher has ever run, facilitation skills were being developed during the project. This would have impacted on the discussion. Thirdly, given that, as previously mentioned, the focus group students were not a random sample but volunteers, they tended to be "good kids." It is probable that this also impacted on the tone of the discussion groups.

The difference in information seeking behaviour between the group of students who used the school library for their last school assignment and those who did not was unexpected. It is not clear from this study why school library users are more active in information seeking than nonusers. One can hypothesize that school library users are the 'good' students and so are more inclined to 'go the extra mile'. It is possible that school library users are more inclined to use many information sources because they are adept at seeking information. The information

Graph1. Why students use the library



seeking skills they have gained within the school library are eminently transferable skills. The students have taken these skills and used them to obtain information from other sources. Another possibility is that those students who used the school library had a complex assignment to complete, requiring the use of multiple information sources. The question regarding information use did not ask for a description of

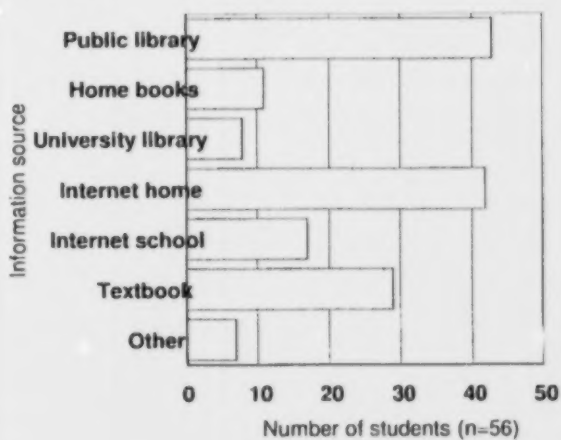
the last assignment, just what information sources were used.

This result has implications for schools. If school library use, in itself, leads to greater use of a wide range of information sources, then schools need to make the school library a place that students want to use. Results point to two variables that influenced student use of the library. They were (1) a perception that the library houses resources required for school assignments and (2) usually finding these resources when they were looked for. By ensuring that students think the library has adequate resources that they usually can find when they want schools could increase the use of the school library.

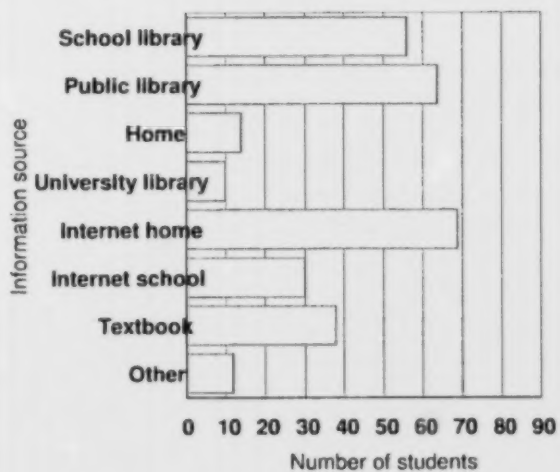
This has been an exploratory project to assess senior secondary school student use of the school library. The hypothesis for the research was that senior high school students believe that the school library has inadequate resources and services to meet the needs of their academic work and therefore they make little use of the school library. Results completely refute this hypothesis. Nearly all senior students used the school library, over one half think the staff are approachable, and most (60.0%) used school library resources for their last school assignment. These findings paint a very positive picture of senior secondary students use and perceptions of the school library.

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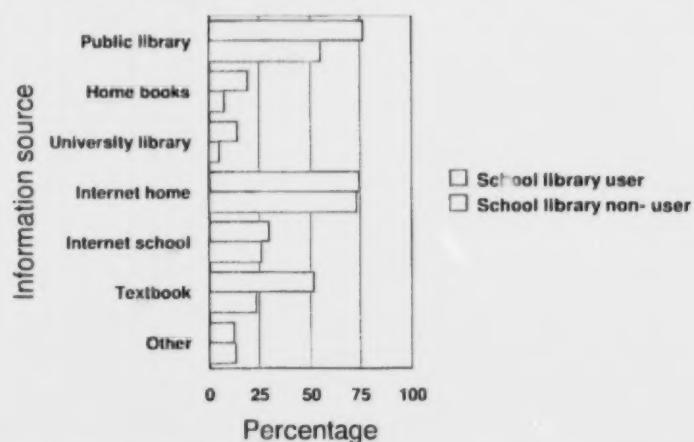
Graph 3. Information sources used in conjunction with school library



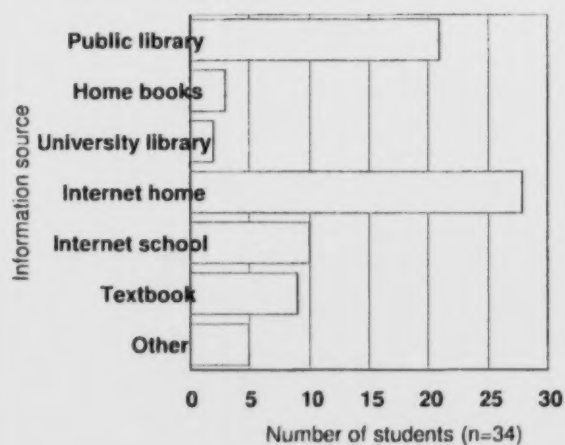
Graph 2. Information sources for last assign



Graph 5. Information sources of school library users and non-users



Graph 4. Information sources used by those who did not use the school library



Graph 6. Information sources of students who did not use a library for their last assign

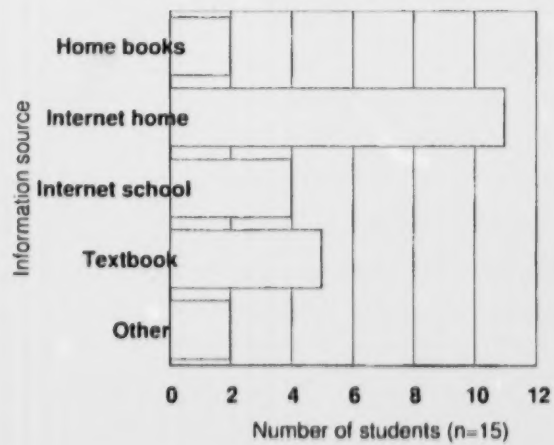


Table 1. Student opinion about the school library

Survey Question B: Statement about the library	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Number	Percent %	Number	Percent %	Number	Percent %	Number	Percent %	Number	Percent %
A. I only use the library during class visits	5	5.6%	15	16.6%	29	32.2%	27	30%	14	15.6%
B. I usually find what I need in the library	4	4.4%	26	31.1%	28	31.1%	24	26.7%	6	6.7%
C. I only go to the library to use the computers	0	0%	2	2.2%	16	17.8%	50	55.6%	22	24.4%
D. Library staff are approachable	12	13.3%	35	38.9%	25	27.8%	12	13.3%	6	6.7%
E. The library is often closed when I need to use it	3	3.3%	8	8.9%	24	26.7%	40	44.4%	14	15.6%
F. I never ask library staff for help to locate materials	8	8.9%	13	14.4%	21	23.3%	38	42.2%	9	10%
G. The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork	4	4.4%	22	24.4%	35	38.9%	25	27.8%	4	4.4%
H. I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library	2	2.2%	17	18.9%	31	34.4%	34	37.8%	5	5.6%
I. The library is a good place to study	8	8.9%	40	44.4%	30	33.3%	8	8.9%	4	4.4%
J. School assignments require the use of the library	12	13.3%	33	36.7%	22	24.4%	22	24.4%	1	1.1%
K. I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library	12	13.3%	33	36.7%	36	40%	3	3.3%	6	6.7%

Table 2. Student opinion about school library differentiated by those who used the school library for their last school assignment and those who did not

Survey Question 9: Statement about the library	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Library user	Library non-user	Library user	Library non-user	Library user	Library non-user	Library user	Library non-user	Library user	Library non-user
A. I only use the library during class visits	2	3	9	6	15	13	10	6	10	4
B. I usually find what I need in the library	4	0	22	7	20	7	6	17	2	3
C. I only go to the library to use the computers	0	0	1	1	9	9	34	18	12	8
D. Library staff are approachable	6	4	22	13	16	12	7	3	3	3
E. The library is often closed when I need to use it	3	0	1	4	13	13	27	14	11	3
F. I never ask library staff for help to locate materials	4	4	6	0	13	9	26	11	9	4
G. The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork	1	3	12	10	18	17	21	14	4	0
H. I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library	1	1	9	8	17	14	24	10	5	0
I. The library is a good place to study	4	4	28	12	18	12	4	4	2	2
J. School assignments require the use of the library	9	3	22	11	13	9	12	10	0	1
K. I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library	11	1	18	15	22	16	2	8	3	3

n=50 Students who used the school library for their last assignment
n=34 Students who did not use the school library for their last assignment

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Table 3. Regression analysis of statements about the school library^a

Survey Question B Statement about the library	A. I only use the library during class visits	B. I usually find what I need in the library	C. I only go to the library to use the computers	D. Library staff are approachable	E. The library is often closed when I need to use it	F. I never ask library staff for help to locate materials	G. The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork	H. I feel that I have outgrown the school library	I. The library is a good place to study	J. School assignments require the use of the library	K. I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library
A. I only use the library during class visits	~	0.58	0.44	0.43	0.75	0.64	0.77	0.89	0.06	0.14	0.05
B. I usually find what I need in the library	0.58	~	0.05	0.58	0.25	0.34	0.88	0.72	0.58	0.75	0.39
C. I only go to the library to use the computers	0.44	0.05	~	0.19	0.87	0.74	0.08	0.38	0.19	0	0.31
D. Library staff are approachable	0.43	0.58	0.19	~	0.03	0	0.36	0.11	0.88	0.77	0.8
E. The library is often closed when I need to use it	0.75	0.25	0.87	0.3	~	0.8	0.36	0.73	0.03	0.03	0.07
F. I never ask library staff for help to locate materials	0.64	0.34	0.74	0	0.9	~	0.41	0.78	0	0.15	0.04
G. The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork	0.77	0.88	0.08	0.38	0.36	0.41	~	0.85	0.4	0.53	0.37
H. I feel that I have outgrown the school library	0.89	0.72	0.39	0.11	0.73	0.78	0.85	~	0.11	0.35	0.06
I. The library is a good place to study	0.08	0.59	0.19	0.88	0.03	0	0.4	0.11	~	0.67	0.87
J. School assignments require the use of the library	0.14	0.75	0	0.77	0.03	0.15	0.53	0.35	0.87	~	0.41
K. I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library	0.05	0.39	0.31	0.8	0.07	0.04	0.37	0.06	0.87	0.41	~

^a The closer the value is to 1, the more closely the statements are correlated

Table 4. Class visits.

Class	Number of visits
English	62
Biology	34
History	13
Classics, P.E.	9
Maths, Art	8
Chemistry	6
Languages, Geography	5
Music, Drama, Media Studies, 'Other'	4
Health, Physics, Economics, Photography, ESOL	2

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Appendix A: School Library Questionnaire

1. What year are you in? ☐ Year 12 ☐ Year 13

2. Gender. ☐ Female ☐ Male

3. Thinking about your last school assignment, where did you go to find information?
Please tick as many boxes as you need to.

- ☐ school library
- ☐ public library
- ☐ home library
- ☐ university library
- ☐ the Internet at home
- ☐ the Internet at school
- ☐ school textbook
- ☐ other (please specify).....

The next questions relate to the school library

4. Have you used the school library this year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes' please go to question 6 ; if 'no' please go to question 5.

5. If you do not use the school library, please indicate why not by ticking the relevant box(es).
Once you have answered Question 5, please go to Question 9 and complete the questionnaire.

- ☐ I do not need to use a library to complete my school work
- ☐ I use other libraries instead of the school library
- ☐ The library never has the resources that I need so I have given up using it
- ☐ There are too many rules
- ☐ The library is not open when I would like to use it
- ☐ Other reasons(please specify).....

6. Why did you use the school library?

You can tick more than one box.

- ☐ as a class group with teacher
- ☐ a place to study
- ☐ to find course-related material in books
- ☐ to find course-related material on the computer
- ☐ to socialize / meet friends
- ☐ to find recreational reading
- ☐ to 'muck about' on the computers
- ☐ other (please specify).....

7. Please indicate the classes that you have visited the library with.

You may tick more than one box.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ English | ☐ Physical Education |
| ☐ Maths | ☐ Health |
| ☐ Biology | ☐ Art |
| ☐ Chemistry | ☐ Music |
| ☐ History | ☐ Geography |
| ☐ Drama | ☐ Physics |
| ☐ Classics | ☐ Other (please specify)..... |
| ☐ Languages | |

8. Thinking of the school library, please tick the box that matches your opinion about each of the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I only use the library during class visits					
I usually find what I need in the library					
I only go to the library to use the computers					
Library staff are approachable					
The library is often closed when I need to use it					
I never ask library staff for help to locate materials					
The library lacks the resources I need for schoolwork					
I feel that I have 'outgrown' the school library					
The library is a good place to study					
School assignments require the use of the library					
I have had adequate instruction in the use of the library					

9. What is the most positive thing you could say about the school library?
Please continue overleaf if you need to.

10. What is the most negative thing you could say about the school library?
Please continue overleaf if you need to.

11. Any comments or statements you would like to make regarding the school library?
Please continue overleaf if you need to.

Thank you for answering this survey.

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction

Dear

Thank you for your initial interest in my study of school libraries. The aim of this study is to assess the senior students use and perceptions of the school library. As a school principal you will be aware of the financial cost of running of a school library. This study will be of value to you by giving you insight into the factors that influence senior students use of the library. With this knowledge you could better target resources and plan library programmes.

I am requesting permission to distribute a questionnaire to two classes of senior students and to run a small focus group session with eight senior students. The focus group will be run during a lunch break and, unless there are objections, I will provide a pizza lunch for those students who had volunteered to participate. I am also requesting some basic demographic data regarding your school.

Please find attached the following forms:

Consent forms

Information for parents

Information for schools

Questionnaire

Focus group questions

Demographics form

If you **do not wish to participate in this study**, please return this information in the enclosed stamp-addressed envelope.

If you **wish to be involved in this study**, please send the consent form back in the enclosed stamp-addressed envelope. I will then contact you to make an appointment to discuss any questions that you may have and arrange a time to conduct the study.

Thank you.

Regards,

Appendix C: School Principal Consent Form

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the factors that influence senior students use of the school library. A greater understanding of these factors will enable schools to develop their library programmes and collections to maximum effect.

Please read, sign and return this consent form if you agree to students from your school participating in this project.

1. I have been given and understand the purpose of the study. I understand that the information that will be provided by both myself and students will not be used for anything other than this purpose.
2. I understand that I am completely free to withdraw my school from this study without providing any explanation until the end of September, 2001.
3. I understand that the research person will keep any information provided by myself or by students, including the identity of the school and individual students, absolutely confidential.
4. I understand that the information that will be provided by myself and students is to be used to investigate the factors that influence student use of the school library.
5. I understand that I will not be given any information that will link any comments or opinions to individual students who have participated in this study.
6. I understand that the data will be stored in a secure place for as long as they are needed for the study and follow-up, and then will be destroyed.
7. I understand that a copy of the completed project report will be made available to my school.

I agree to both myself and students at this school participating in this research.

Please print your name above.

Please sign your name above.

Appendix D: Student Use of the School Library.

My name is Kathryn Kershaw and I am researching as part of a Masters degree in Library and Information Studies at Victoria University of Wellington.

My research involves asking students to complete a questionnaire regarding where they go to find information for school work and their opinions about the school library.

A smaller group of students will participate in a focus group discussion about the school library. This session will be audio taped.

Individual students will not be identified in the research report.

The research report will be submitted for marking and deposited in the Victoria University Library. The report may also be published in a professional journal.

Please **sign the permission slip** below if you wish to take part in the study.

Kathryn Kershaw
Ph 348 0117

.....

Permission slip

I consent to take part in the study of student use of the school library.

.....
Student signature

.....
Date

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions.

Initial Preamble.

Firstly welcome all to the group.

Introduce myself.

Breifly talk about the study.

Handout and collect in focus group consent forms.

Explain that there are no 'correct' answers. Both positive and negative comments are equally as useful.

Confirm that all comments made by students will be confidential. No student will be identified in any way.

Set groundrules. Example: one person to talk at a time.

Indicate that the session will be taped and that the tape will be erased upon completion of the study.

Questions.

We are interested in your views on the school library.

For what reasons do you use the school library?

How useful do you find the library resources for school assignments?

Tell me about the library staff.

Breifly, how would you describe your school library to a student from another school?

What, if anything, would you like to see cahnged in your school libt=rary?

Have we missed anything?

Closure.

Thank the students for participating in the study.

Remind them that their remarks will remain confidential.

Ensure that I have all consent forms.

Appendix F: School Demographics

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Please find below a list of the school demographics requested.

1. Student numbers. Please indicate the number of Year 12 and Year 13 students as well as the total number of students.
2. School decile rating.
3. Library staff numbers.
4. Times when the library is open for student use.

Appendix G: School Information Pack.

The School Information Pack consisted of the following information:

1. School Library Questionnaire.
2. Letter of Introduction.
3. School Principal Consent Form.
4. Student use of the School Library (Student Consent Form).
5. Focus Group Questions.
6. School Demographics.
7. Stamped addressed return envelope.



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